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Fewer Hopes, Cooler Heads

The jelly-bean psychologist of the Reagan Administration, Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige, allows that his study of how his colleagues dip into the President's jelly-bean jar during Cabinet meetings goes on as before, "but it is not quite as much fun without Al Haig."

In the first days of the Reagan presidency, Baldrige became intrigued with the various styles of jelly-bean consumption, particularly the aggressive search-and-destroy method of then Secretary of State Haig. "He grasps the jar firmly with both hands," noted Baldrige about Haig, "peers with great intensity into its depths and searches until he finds two red jelly beans. These he pops into his mouth, and there is an audible crunch as he masticates them into oblivion. The man just doesn't like the color red."

Baldrige's wry eye records something important about Reagan's Govern-



Haig used to crunch the reds

ment at this critical moment. The bright colors have faded. The sheer joy of possessing power has lost some luster. The men and women in Reagan's Cabinet are, with the possible exceptions of Education Secretary William Bennett and Attorney General Edwin Meese, centrists devoted to preserving and enlarging the beachhead won in the first term. Their passion has cooled with experience, extreme ideology has given way to accommodation. The controversy that followed Haig, Watt and Donovan has been replaced by the solid sense of Shultz, Hodel and Brock. If the Cabinet members are not flamboyant, they are competent. If they are no longer revolutionary, they are spurred on by the conviction that they have made a difference that must now be preserved.

Baldrige himself, the cowboy-industrialist who tells you with a twinkle that he won 50 bucks roping steers out West this summer, puffs

on a cigarette after breakfast and says that Ronald Reagan has changed the thinking in the U.S. more than any other President since Franklin D. Roosevelt. That crusade must continue. And another thing: Baldrige knows that being in the thick of the deficit, trade and tax battles is more gratifying than anything else he could be doing. Mature power has its own joys.

CIA Director Bill Casey, in pinstriped elegance and ensconced in his splendid home off Washington's Foxhall Road, the very picture of a transplanted New Yorker, softly describes a world that is still dangerous and still unpredictable. But something has happened in the past few years that has heartened him. Revolutionaries for freedom are now getting more recruits than the totalitarians. Casey has had something to do with that, and he relishes the thought.

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, who has endured more criticism than any other Cabinet member, seems utterly unbowed. Gentle and gracious, he pads around his huge Pentagon office complex, believing that the U.S. is just a couple of years and a few billion dollars away from a defense structure that will equal the Soviets' and create an environment in which diplomats can work for peace free of worry about arms imbalances. His task: to stave off the forces that now would dramatically cut defense spending.

Last week, after a session with Reagan, the Cabinet members burst out of their meeting room and flooded down the hall into the West Lobby, a tide of dark blue and charcoal, the colors of their emergent political style. Like the man they serve, they have picked up a few gray hairs and wrinkles and a lot of understanding about how tough it is to move people. Rancor among them is at a remarkably low level. Hopes too have dropped. But as the Cabinet members broke into small clusters, talking and gesturing, then rushing off in their big, brooding limousines, there was the age-old sense of exhilaration that comes with power—even at mid-life.